

REMARKS

Edward Allen

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1807 - 1839

MR. HANNEGAN, OF INDIANA,

ON

THE OREGON TERRITORY:

DELIVERED

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

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REMARKS.

In the Senate of the United States, February 23, 1844.

—On the following resolution offered by Mr. SEMPLE:

Resolved, That the President of the United States be requested to give notice to the British government that it is the desire of the government of the United States to annul and abrogate the provisions of the third article of the convention concluded between the government of the United States of America and his Britannic Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on the 20th October, 1818, and indefinitely continued between the same parties, signed at London the 6th August, 1827.

Mr. HANNEGAN said—

Mr. PRESIDENT: My acknowledgments are due to the senator from New Jersey for yielding the floor to which he is entitled this morning.

I shall endeavor, so far as my recollection will enable me to pursue the remarks of the honorable and distinguished senator from Massachusetts, [Mr. CHOATE,] who on yesterday addressed the Senate with so much ability in opposition to the immediate adoption of this resolution. That senator expresses some objections on the score of form, which I shall notice no farther than to add my concurrence; and I trust, should this resolution be referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as it probably will, that the formal objection will be by them removed, and a joint, instead of a simple resolution, reported back to the Senate. But it is not with matters of form that I have to do at this time. There are matters of substance, of grave and serious importance to the country, involved in the subject, to which I desire to call the attention of the Senate.

The argument of the Senator from Massachusetts involves this strange position: that the entire region of country known as the Territory of Oregon, extending from the parallel of 42° to 52° 40' north latitude, belonged to the United States by a clear and indefeasible title; but that it would not do for us to adopt this resolution, lest, by doing so, we offend Great Britain. That, notwithstanding the unquestionable right by which we hold the country, we must refrain from even giving the notice contemplated here, of our intention to bring to a close the joint occupancy. Instead of doing so, we must meekly and patiently await the pleasure of this formidable and haughty power in everything connected with the question.

The senator from Massachusetts is apparently overcome with alarm, and endeavors to infuse that alarm into the Senate and the country at the proposition before us. He inquired, in terms and with a manner indicative of deep anxiety, where we would be—where we should stand, if the resolution

passed and the required notice was given? Need I tell that senator we will be doing nothing more in this, than complying with the provisions of the convention which created this joint occupancy, and which requires such notice as the means of determining the joint occupancy. If this resolution passes, and the notice is given, this government will stand precisely where it stood before the convention, which gave England admission into Oregon; just where we stood before our own imprudence gave her a foothold on our western borders. Strange, indeed, does it seem, that compliance with a provision, inserted in the treaty expressly to avoid difficulty, and to prevent hostility, should be construed here into matter of offence. The very means which the two parties selected for the preservation of peace, the honorable gentleman deprecates as a measure of hostility, leading to war. Adopt the resolution, give the notice it requires, and he tells us that "our claim and that of England will at once stand front to front"—in plain words, we will immediately find her in the attitude of hostility. Singular inconsistency! If I understood the gentleman correctly, he declared our title to the country to be good, and that England has no intention of asserting a claim of right to any portion of it; yet immediately afterwards, he would deter the Senate from the proposed action, because it will bring our claim and that of England front to front. Where is the claim with which England is to confront us? In what does it consist? Will the gentleman be good enough to inform the Senate of that claim which he has told us is without foundation, and which, baseless as it is, he deems sufficient to awe us into silence?

The senator from Massachusetts saw proper occasionally to indulge a tone of sarcasm towards this measure and its friends, which, in my opinion, ill became the occasion, or the character of this chamber, on a subject like the present. From some information in his possession, (the source of which I did not understand,) he informed us that Doctor McLaughlin, and some 1,000 or 1,200 hunters of musk-rats, constituted the entire British force in Oregon, and that their only fortification was a log fort. With mock seriousness, he asked if it could be possible that such a force as this had terrified the West? Was this the hasty language of the heated moment, or was it the language of cool deliberation? Can it be possible that I understood the senator aright? Sir, upon a grave and momentous question like the present, I did not expect such attempts at ridicule from the honorable gentleman. I was not prepared for such ironical attacks from him, before the American Senate, and before the world, upon a large portion of his countrymen, whose feelings he well knows are deeply enlisted in this question.

Had a British peer been admitted to an audience in this chamber, and used such language in support of his country's pretensions, I could, without difficulty, have comprehended his motives.

Is it, as he would create the impression, that ten or twelve hundred trappers constitute the whole force with which we can be brought in contention for Oregon? or is it the power of England? Need I tell that gentleman that it is the latter, when we have his own authority for it that we will have England on us if we move even so far as to adopt the present resolution? Terrified at these thousand trappers! No, sir; the word, in the sense he uses it, has no place in our vocabulary. England, with all her power—her armies and her navies—has not the power to strike terror to our hearts. Come when and how she will, she will find us at least undismayed.

The senator from Massachusetts says that, previous to using the expressions I have just alluded to, he had examined and disposed of the argument whether Great Britain, if not disposed to forward agricultural interests in Oregon, would offer any resistance or annoyance to peaceable agriculturists from the United States. He says that, having proved they would not, he used the words complained of in ridiculing the idea that the Hudson Bay company could, even if disposed, prove any annoyance.

I am well aware that the senator used the language as he states; but I cannot see that this, in any manner, changes its meaning. If Great Britain does not intend to persist in her claim to the soil; if she makes none; if she acquiesces in our settlement of the country, and thereby acknowledges our claim, then every reason he has urged against this resolution falls to the ground. They are certainly no longer entitled to consideration, and the resolution must be adopted as a matter of course, and the notice given, without resistance from any quarter.

I must confess that I feel far more cause for terror in some of the sentiments advanced by that senator, than England, with all her armament by sea and land, can ever inspire. Sir, I allude especially to the appeal which he made to the worst, the sordid passions of the human heart—his address to the representatives of the woollen manufacturers and the iron-mongers, whether they would be willing to place the country in an attitude of hostility with England, without first counting the cost; and this, too, accompanied by a significant allusion of a reference to the Committee of Ways and Means, to ascertain, in the first place, what that cost would be. And what then? What did all this mean? There can be but one meaning to it. If the cost, in their opinion, should be too great—if too much money is required—then the Oregon is to be abandoned. England, without title and without right, is to possess herself of that fair land, equal, in extent, to the thirteen original States. And this is not all—not half; but national honor, national character, weighed in the scale against gold, shall kick the beam. The heart sickens at the thought that such things can be possible; that such a sacrifice can be meditated; a sacrifice forbidden by every principle dear and holy in an American heart.

Mr. President, I represent a people on this floor who, without distinction of party or of creed, no matter under what name their political preferences may be expressed, are as one man, with one heart, one sentiment, attached, with idolatrous devotion, to the integrity and the perpetuity of the Union. They

are ready to preserve it, in the hour of need, with their blood. But, as their representative, I here avow—and I am willing to stake my future fortunes on that avowal—that, sooner than see the honor and character of the nation prostrated before the altars of filthy Mammon—sooner than see national glory bartered for gold, I would embrace with delight the Utopia of the senator from South Carolina:—ay, three distinct, separate, independent republics, rather than one government, which would stoop to such deep and damning degradation.

But suppose that by such means we preserve peace—by surrendering to Great Britain a portion of the country, and placing the question in the broadest possible light;—suppose she gives us what gentlemen may term an equivalent for it: under existing circumstances, what would it be but a bargain made under the mouths of her cannon—a purchased peace? And what, let me ask, is the value of a purchased peace? What has been the fate of nations preceding us who have resorted to such infamous expedients? History warns us that their existence thereafter is brief; their days are thenceforth numbered; their march is on the road, the inevitable road, to swift destruction. If we purchase peace once, we must do it again, and again, and again, until all means of purchase are exhausted. Then shall it follow with us as it has followed with others—nothing remains but to fasten the easy yoke upon the effeminate and degenerate people who have bartered character for peace, honor for ease. How widely do such principles contrast with the glorious sentiment of our own heroic countryman, indelibly graven on every true American heart—“Millions for defence, but not one cent for tribute!”

Before leaving this matter of cost, I cannot refrain from an expression which occurred to me in the course of the remarks of the senator from Massachusetts. Whenever the pecuniary interests of his section of the Union are at stake, or likely to be affected, (no matter how slightly,) this Capitol resounds with loud and impassioned appeals against any policy which may thus affect them. But, in reply to my friend from Missouri, [Mr. Atchison,] who described to us the declination and final destruction of the fur trade in the hands of Americans, effected solely by the British fur company in Oregon, he did not extend one word of sympathy, or deign a passing notice of a fact which ought certainly to inspire some consideration, even with those who reside on the Atlantic.

I shall now endeavor briefly to review the real question before us; but, as the question of title is conceded—the gentleman from Massachusetts himself, as strongly as any one else, having expressed his convictions of the perfect nature of our title, and the total want of it in Great Britain—it is unnecessary for me to review the sources of our claim.

In the debate on this subject which occurred in this chamber at the last session, all, I believe, concurred in relation to our title. No gentleman entertained or expressed a doubt of its entire soundness against all others. No one, I believe, pretended that England had even a colorable title to the country. The question is, consequently, narrowed down; it is shrouded in no mystery; it requires no ingenuity to unriddle it. The whole matter is resolved into this: For certain purposes, and at a time when the exclusive occupancy was not necessary to us, we granted to Great Britain certain privileges within the territory concurrent with our own—the right being mutually reserved to annul the joint ex-

cupancy by which these privileges exist, on giving the notice provided for by the resolution under consideration. This is the whole case. And with what propriety can it be affirmed that the action now proposed is, in effect, an act of hostility? Upon what principle can it be regarded as belligerent? So far from it, that it is impossible for me to regard it as unfriendly, or even unkind.

The country is ours—I hesitate not at the assertion; I defy contradiction—by a title as strong as that by which we hold any other part of the American republic. The only rights which Great Britain has in the premises, are permissive, derived from us, and subject to termination at our will. With this view of the subject, (and it is the only view I can take of it, after the most mature reflection,) it only remains to inquire into the motives which, on every side, should impel us to prompt and decided steps in the matter. The voice and the interest of the West, and of the Union, demand the occupation of that land by its true and proper owners. The claim of England, however unsupported by right or justice, will lose nothing by an extension of time. Every day that transpires serves to increase the strength of her pretensions, because hesitancy on our part implies doubt and distrust of our own demands, or, at best, of our capacity to maintain them. Her preparations in that quarter imply a determination to rivet her claim by any means that necessity may ultimately require. She has extended her laws, civil and criminal, over the whole territory. As shown to us on yesterday by the senator from Missouri, [Mr. ARCHISON,]—and the authority cannot be doubted, for he read from a volume of the laws of the British Parliament—she has extended the jurisdiction and the force of her laws across the Rocky mountains to the very confines of Missouri and Iowa. She is disposing, through her fur company, of the best lands, in perpetuity—bestowing them in parcels on the retired servants of this company. While we have been looking idly on, she has been silently advancing with measures that give both speciousness and power to her claim. And this condition of things is progressive. She still advances whilst we hesitate. Is this right? is it proper? Every other consideration aside, does not the national character demand something more? But to add to the necessity of action here, whilst the government has faltered, the enterprising spirit of our people is aroused by the prospect of this new and fertile region, which limits at last the hitherto boundless West. The emigrants, and those who desire to become so, are every day increasing in number. They are pressing forward with an alacrity which nothing can subdue, whilst their neighbors and associates are regarding things with an interest as intense as was ever felt on any subject. I ask senators if they are not willing to extend at least the protection of the American laws over their own fellow-citizens within American limits? As the matter now stands, these emigrants may at any moment come in collision with the British subjects resident in Oregon; and the result is their immediate subjection to British laws, administered by British tribunals, for alleged offences within the territorial limits of the United States. The senator from Massachusetts told us that entire amity existed between the two classes in Oregon—the Englishmen and Americans there. I do not know from whence his authority for this statement is derived; but certainly we have very different information from this, contained in a peti-

tion now lying on our tables, and signed by a number of American emigrants in that territory, complaining of various grievances at the hands of the English authorities there, and asking the interposition of this government to protect them. Some of these petitioners are personally known to both the senators from Missouri, who vouch for them as men of worth and probity.

I hold in my hand an extract from a Montreal paper, which gives a very different and, I suspect, a much more correct view of the condition of things, and the fate of our people in Oregon, than that with which the honorable senator has been furnished. The extract is as follows, from the Montreal Courier:

"It is generally believed at Washington that the recommendation of the President, for the military occupation of the Oregon Territory, and the establishment of a civil government, will be responded to in Congress, with full powers to the government to act. In such case, we have no doubt, the Hudson Bay company, and their Indian allies, will make but a small meal of the troops of the 'free and enlightened.' On a previous occasion, when a party of enterprising Yankees were sailing up the Columbia, an old Indian stood upon an eminence of the river, and pointing to the adventurers, with his low and expressive laugh exclaimed, 'the crows will soon be picking out their eyes.' It was true; they died—no man knows when, or where, or how."

This, sir, is the extract, and my heart chills within me, as I think upon the cold-blooded and atrocious villain who could pen such an article. True, they died—no man knows when, or where, or how; between 400 and 500 of our citizens have perished in this way since the joint-occupation treaty was signed; and my friend from Missouri [Mr. BENTON] says, that among the number were many of his intimate and valued personal friends.

The increasing emigration of our people to Oregon presents the strongest possible argument for unequivocal measures on the part of this government.

As our population there increases, so are their possessions increasing in value and importance; their villages will be springing up, their farms extending, their flocks and herds covering hill and valley. If England intends to persist in a claim to the country, the longer we delay the greater will be the injury inflicted on us there when the blow does come; for every growing village, every additional farm-house, adds to English cupidity, increases her desire to hold on, and increases for our people there the horrors of war.

It is true, I have seen lately, in some of the leading papers of the adjoining cities, denunciations of this course of emigration. These denunciations, I presume, may very properly be traced to the speech of the honorable and distinguished senator from South Carolina, [Mr. McDUFFIE,] delivered in this chamber at the last session—a gentleman, let me say, for whom I have ever cherished the highest admiration, and the most profound respect. On that occasion, the senator, in substance, characterized this system of emigration as the mere spirit of wanton adventure, injurious to the best interests of the country. Differing entirely with this opinion, let me ask why the spirit should be checked, or why encouraged by the government? If it is merely the spirit of wanton adventure, without any laudable aim, it should be checked, and checked promptly. But, sir, I say for those with whom I am acquaint-

ed, who are desirous of emigrating to Oregon, as will every senator here who knows anything of this class of our people, that they have other and higher motives in view than the mere gratification of a roving inclination. Mingle and talk with them, sir; hear from their own lips their feelings and their views; and, my life upon it, the humblest man among them will tell you, in the warm language of the heart, his anticipations of the future glory and the growing grandeur of his country—of its increasing power, of the day not distant, when he hopes to see the American ensign swing from a thousand masts on the waters of the Columbia. It would ill become this government to rebuke such a spirit in her people, when (as here) it is lawfully directed. To this identical spirit do we mainly owe our existence as a nation. What else was it that brought Sir Walter Raleigh, and Captain Smith, and their brave comrades, to these shores? And notwithstanding all their regard for religious freedom, but for this same spirit our pilgrim fathers never would have sought a new home in the inhospitable North, nor the persecuted Huguenot a resting place in the savannahs of the South. To the influence of this spirit alone, the republic owes the brightest jewel in her diadem—the West—the giant—the all-glorious West. Fifty years ago, an almost untrodden wilderness; to-day, her teeming millions speak through upwards of twenty senators on this floor, and nearly one hundred representatives in the opposite wing of the Capitol. Rebuke it? Never! It is the spirit that founds and sustains empires.

The senator from Massachusetts implores us to pause, to delay yet a little longer—but six months more—before we proceed to action, by the adoption of a measure like this, or anything else, I suppose, that would advance us a foot from our present position. Why should we pause longer? So far as I have read or heard, no man in America admits a doubt of our title to the country. But the senator says that England does not want the country for agricultural purposes; that the fur trade furnishes the only value she attaches to it; that beyond this it has no other importance in her eyes; and, as she does not want it for the purposes of agriculture, if we will but let her finish her hunting there, she will be up and away to the Russian dominions north of us. The purposes of agriculture are the least amongst the views which England has in extending her dominions. Would the gentleman have us to believe that, because England does not want it for agriculture, she attaches no value to it? would hazard no struggle for it? What is her history on this score? She did not want the tops of the mountains of Maine for agriculture, and yet she would have gone to war for them. She did not require the rock of Gibraltar as a garden—no; it was because it commanded the pass from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean; and to preserve it she maintained an armed front towards Europe. It was not for the sake of agriculture that she desired the island of Malta, with earth some eight or ten inches in depth; yet sooner than restore it, she refused to let the torch of war be quenched which held all Europe in a blaze. It was not for the advancement of agriculture that she has just before our own eyes deluged the plains of Afghanistan with blood. No, sir, no; it is power—power—the power which position gives that she seeks. Give her the mouth of the Columbia, and she commands the Pacific. This is her object; and I have now in my possession a number of the London Morning Chronicle, which develops her views in relation to

Oregon somewhat differently from the picture of the senator from Massachusetts, and I think the English editor may fairly be presumed to know as much about his country's intentions as that gentleman. Here are the views of the Morning Chronicle, in a long article, an extract from which sets forth that—

"It is useless to represent the Oregon Territory as but of little value, and to depict certain districts of it as presenting but one wide area of irreclaimable desert. A single glance at the map will convince the most ordinary understanding of the commercial and political importance which will soon be attached to the northwest coast of America. And if so, the harbor formed by the mouth of the Oregon river will become an invaluable position, being the only available harbor on the coast for many hundred miles on either side of it. In the hands of a powerful people, it will give them the entire control of the north Pacific and of the commerce of Eastern Asia. This is a consideration of no little weight, when we consider the new relations into which China has been latterly brought with the civilized world. These impart to the territory a great additional value; and whatever enhances its value, renders the dispute concerning it one more difficult of adjustment. A golden opportunity has been culpably thrown away when the settlement of it would have been comparatively an easy matter. Henceforth it will be a source of constant irritation between us and the American government, until at length, to avoid further humiliating concessions, we are driven to assert our right of property by the sword. From present appearances, the alternative of war or concession is one that will speedily be offered us."

These are the views of a leading English journal, and they are certainly to be regarded as throwing some light on the intentions of that government, occupying a high position with at least one of the two great parties in that country—a position such as the Globe and Intelligeneer occupy with their respective parties here.

Wait a little longer, says the senator from Massachusetts. What, I ask, have we to hope, what to dread, from immediate action? What that may not be anticipated from any decisive action in future? Is it likely that Great Britain will withdraw her claim? that she will relent of her unjust pretensions to this territory? When, in the history of the last eight centuries, from William the Norman to this hour, has she relented—even paused in her career of conquest and domination?

"The uttermost parts of the earth are our inheritance," is the sentiment which animates the British warrior; it governs the British council; it is the avowed language of her writers, and its home is to be found in every true Englishman's bosom.

Before this tremendous spirit, sustained equally by her policy and her arms, the mighty monarchies of Europe have successively dwindled, until in all the old world but one power remains, equal and undaunted to confront her. When gentlemen are talking about negotiating with England for a territory like Oregon, involving such great interests as I have shown she attaches to it, they will allow us, who feel an equal interest in it, to remind them that her present condition of unparalleled power is as much the fruit of her diplomacy as of her arms; that to such men as her Walsinghams and her Walpoles, her Pitts and her Castlereaghs, she owes as much as to her Marlboroughs, her Rodneys, her Nelsons, or her Wellingtons. With the last she is

and ever has been ready, without scruple, to second the designs of the first. And with the one or the other, she has thus far carried those designs, as well as I can recollect, except in the single instance of the two wars with this country. Retract! No, sir; judging her by the past, if she deals with us as she has dealt with others, she never will retract in peace from such a stake as this. Her foot is on the Columbia; and when she lifts it we will not owe it to diplomacy. We must win it if we wear it.

Is it asked why we should pass this measure at once? Because, in plain truth, it is time that the present condition of things should be brought to a close. It is time for us to know where we stand. Soon or late we must move; she never will; she has no cause to stir; the country is in her possession, occupied by her arms, and governed by her laws, to all intents and purposes a portion of her dominions. It is not necessary for her to commence; our people in the territory can cause her no disturbance, as they are at all times subject to her laws, and her laws alone, without the interference or protection of ours. In this state of things it is plain she must repose. What have we to gain by delay? Nothing; nothing on earth that I can see or imagine. We are in the position of a man whose house has been entered in his absence, and who, at his return, finds the intruder at the door forbidding his entrance. Shall the lawful owner desert his family and property through dread of the man of violence, and in the hope that, after a time, he will be allowed to enter his home in peace? Shall we delay a manly assertion of our rights—rights in the eye of God, and all mankind, because a mighty nation, in the insolence of her bloated power, dares to cast on us an angry or a threatening glance? Or shall we, after the example of our ancestors, assert the right, and leave the consequence to God—let that consequence be peace, or let it be war?

The honorable senator from Massachusetts, on yesterday, asserted that those who would advocate a war in preference to a treaty that would give us this territory, or an equivalent for so much as we might lose of it, "were fitter for hell than for earth."

Sir, if by this it is implied that those who advocate an appeal to arms, rather than be forced to treat, are "fitter for hell than for earth." I am one of them. I utter it. I proclaim the sentiment, fitter though the gentleman may think it "for hell than for earth." Sooner than dispose of one foot under restraint, let the last alternative come. It will not find us unprepared. The senator speaks of an equivalent. What equivalent would he take? Shall we be compelled to take money for it, when we have no wish to sell, and no motive to prompt us, but the will—the iron will of haughty England? Countless millions would be no equivalent. Its very touch would blister the patriot's hand.

Whenever a question involving anything connected with Oregon—no matter in what shape—has been before us; when, upon a resolution by the senator from Ohio, a few weeks since; or, at the commencement of this week, when some book question agitated the matter,—we are assailed with complaints that anything like action at present is premature; that negotiation will soon settle the whole matter for us. Why is this plea of expected negotiation constantly interposed? Will gentlemen be good enough to inform us what there is to negotiate about? To afford ground for negotiation, there must be conflicting, or, at any rate, separate and independent rights involved.

Where the rights of a question are all on one side—plain, well-defined, and understood, and that question is one simply of title, as here—what is there for negotiators to act upon? Suppose that Great Britain should assert a claim to the unoccupied country east of the Rocky mountains, or to the Territory of Iowa, or to the State of Louisiana: would you negotiate about it? Who is here that for an instant would harbor the thought? And yet, to my mind, there is as much propriety in the one case as in the other. Our title to the one is as clear and strong as to the others.

That Great Britain is sincerely desirous of retaining this territory, no one can doubt, that observes the current of affairs with ordinary attention. She sees and fully appreciates the vast advantages to be derived from its possession. The wealth which lies dormant in the extensive and fertile valley of the Columbia and its tributaries, and the mineral wealth of the mountains which encompass that valley—the admirable position which the mouth of that river is described to be, by all who know it for a great commercial city—the facilities which it will furnish for a direct and safe intercourse and trade with the islands of the Pacific, with China, and with India—advantages which as yet cannot be computed, but which all concede must be immense;—and last, and indeed the highest immediate consideration, is the power which it would give her to operate upon the numerous Indian tribes, now congregated in that direction, on the whole line of our western frontier. With them, her intercourse must be continued and unchecked, if she is permitted to retain this or any other portion of this territory.

In selecting a permanent home for the Indian tribes, one great and leading object with this government was to remove them from the neighborhood of any foreign power; but especially, and above all others, from the vicinity of the British dominions.

Sir, this proximity will not do. This facility of access and communication will not answer. Who can tell the fearful extent of the consequences, if, through the active and artful emissaries of England, these tribes should be confederated and stirred up? In a single hour, ere the alarm could be sounded, the knives of fifty thousand Indian warriors might consign the vast frontier of the West to the fell genius of desolation. Along the whole line one protracted scene of fire and blood—the blood of the generous, brave, and simple-hearted pioneers, their helpless wives, and innocent children. When gentlemen remind us of their commerce and their seaboard, let them remember that their brethren in the West have causes of both interest and alarm not less weighty. I appeal to the Senate, shall England be left in possession of this terrific check? Remove every other motive; is it not sufficient to determine us? Considerations like these, sir, it seems to me, must outweigh all questions of intrinsic value, if, indeed, the question of intrinsic value can attract us, for a moment, from other and paramount considerations. By paramount considerations—for, in the noble language of the distinguished senator from Missouri, [Mr. BENTON,] on Monday last—this is not a question of dollars and cents. No, sir; it is a question of national honor or national shame. In the attitude which the controversy now holds, I would not weigh the mere value of the country as a feather. I would not stop to ask if it be rich or poor, fruitful or barren. It is enough for me to know that, without the shadow of a title, and conscious of the wrong she meditates, Great Britain attempts to

wrest from us that which is our own—our own. If the whole face of the earth there were volcanic—if no blade of grass ever grew, from the snowy mountains to the 54th degree of latitude, sooner than yield it to her, I would take the hazards of a war which should end only in the destruction of the one or the other. Yes, regardless of the appeal made to our nerves by the senator from Massachusetts, notwithstanding the bold figure with which he would frighten our fancies—yes, fearless of that “cagle,” if thwarted, as he described England, ready to stoop, beak, talons, and all, on Oregon. If declaring our own to be our own, brings England, beak, talons, and all, on Oregon, let her come. Sir, I little expected to hear such appeals from one whose home is fast by the early and glorious battle-fields of the revolution. Surely he did not learn to dread England when standing on the consecrated field of Bunker’s Hill. Let England dare to stoop from her lofty poise on Oregon; if she does, she will never, never, resume that poise again. Her flight hence will be slow and unsteady, with her wings clipped, and her talons harmless.

It has been gravely asserted in some of the public journals, that a conspiracy exists amongst the western members of the democratic party, headed by my honorable and distinguished friend from Missouri, [Mr. BENTON,] whose designs are to plunge the country, at all hazards, into a war with Great Britain. A charge of this kind may have found some room for its propagation in the language of the honorable senator from Virginia, [Mr. ARCHER,] the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; not, I am confident, with a view to such an impression on the public mind.

For one, I can say, that if such a conspiracy exists, I have some right to complain of my friends for not permitting me to know it; for surely they are aware that no man has the interest of the country, as involved in the Oregon question, more at heart than I have. And yet, until yesterday, I have never ex-

changed words with the distinguished senator from Missouri on the subject of our Oregon relations.

I care not to say, however, that if the government refuses to do its duty towards our citizens there, by extending to them the shield of its laws, and the necessary protection of its arms, I would not hesitate to unite with patriotic and honorable men in assisting those citizens to the means of protecting themselves.

Upon the subject of war, let me, once for all, say there is no gentleman here who would be farther from involving his country in an unjust war than I would. There are none here who appreciate the horrors of war more sensibly. I appeal to God for the sincerity of my declaration, that no earthly consideration would induce me to take a step, or give a vote here, that would plunge the country in an unjust war. I could not brave the goadings of my own conscience for such an act. But, armed with justice and with right, as we are here, I, for one, can never pause to weigh the consequences. “Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just.”

In conclusion, I must add, that a tardy course here—a refusal to act on the part of Congress—will have no effect in allaying the deep and settled determination of the Western people. From the days of Lewis and Clark, they have regarded the rich valley of the Oregon with growing interest; and this hour they are more keenly alive to the question that has grown out of it than any other since the last struggle with Great Britain. They feel not only the importance of the territory, but they feel the nation’s honor involved; and, thus feeling, they will never consent to a surrender or partition of their birth-right.

Involving all that it does, to them it is priceless. No “equivalent” in money can buy it. All the blandishments of the most courtly negotiator cannot win it away, and I but proclaim what I believe to be the general sentiment of those I represent. They will, as they ought to do, preserve it entire, undivided; or, if God so will it, perish in its defence.